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ABSTRACT

This report presents tables, graphs, and text summarizing baccalaureate graduation rates in Texas beginning with a cohort of first-time, full-time students who entered a public college or university in Texas in 1985. Graduation rates are typically described as the percentage of first-time, full-time students who earn baccalaureate degrees within 6 years of enrolling at a higher education institution. For Texas' public higher education institutions, these figures have been compiled for the past five 6-year periods. The graduation rate reflects both students who graduate from the institution in which they first enroll and students who transfer and graduate from another Texas public institution. Six-year graduation rates at Texas public universities improved 1.8 percent from the 1985 freshman cohort to the 1989 cohort. However, Texas rates still do not compare favorably with rates in other states and National College Athletic Association institutions. After 6 years, only 48.7 percent of the university freshman cohort had graduated. There are several factors that may explain these data. Students that require remediation are less likely to graduate within 6 years of initial college enrollment and 6 years is probably an inadequate period to determine how many community and technical college students are likely to earn a baccalaureate degree since nearly 50 percent of these students are enrolled part-time. After 6 years, 20.1 percent of the 1989 cohort is still enrolled in a public college or university and 26.8 of the community and technical college cohort is still enrolled in a public institution. (JLS)

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Baccalaureate Graduation Rates

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Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Division of Research, Planning and Finance
October 1996

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The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board will promote access to quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access is unacceptable. The Board will be open, ethical, responsive, and committed to public service. The Board will approach its work with a sense of purpose and responsibility to the people of Texas and is committed to the best use of public monies.

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Baccalaureate Graduation Rate Report

Graduation rates are typically described as the percentage of first-time, full-time[1] students who earn baccalaureate degrees within six years of enrolling at a higher education institution. For Texas' public higher education institutions, these figures have been compiled by the Coordinating Board staff for the past five six-year periods, beginning with the cohort of first-time, full-time students who entered a public college or university in Texas in 1985. Students are tracked as long as they are enrolled in a public institution of higher education in Texas. The graduation rate reflects both students who graduate from the institution in which they first enroll and students who transfer and graduate from another Texas public university.

Although these figures provide valuable insights into the performance of higher education institutions, they must be considered in relation to other factors at each institution. For example, not all colleges and universities share the same mission. Also, some institutions are highly selective when admitting students. And most institutions enroll many different types of students -- recent high school graduates, people returning to institutions after years in the work force, full-time students, part-time students, and others. In addition, among all groups of students are many who are not adequately prepared for higher education.

Graduation rates are also complicated by different and changing student goals. Although it is probable that students enrolled full time at universities intend to pursue a baccalaureate degree, a significant number of them probably change their major course of study before they earn that degree. Those changes often require the student to take additional course work to meet the requirements for a degree in the new discipline. Assessing student goals is more difficult at public community and technical colleges. With their open-door policies, community colleges offer options including continuing education, certificate, and academic and technical associates degree programs. Most students do not enter community and technical colleges intending to obtain a baccalaureate degree.

While recognizing these limitations, graduation rates remain important indicators of the success students have in obtaining baccalaureate degrees after entering colleges and universities. This report focuses on the success of university students and academic degree-track community college students.

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[1]Enrolled for at least 12 semester credit hours (SCH).

Texas Baccalaureate Graduation Rates

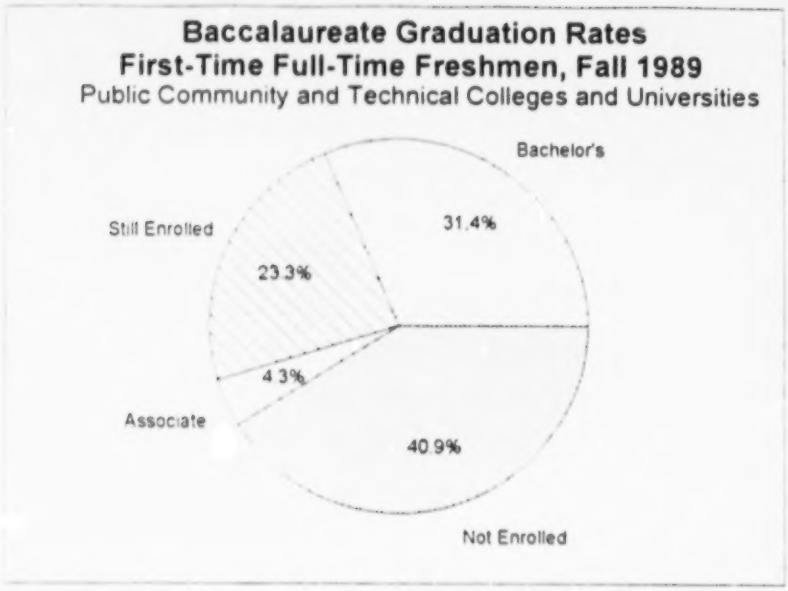

Figure 1

Each fall approximately 125,000 to 135,000 students enter Texas public community and technical colleges and universities for the first time. Of those students, approximately 81,000 enroll in at least 12 semester credit hours (SCH) and are considered by most to be full-time students. Since 1985, the Coordinating Board staff has been tracking successive cohorts of first-time/full-time students to understand their progress toward graduation. The most recent cohort of students entered in the fall of 1989. Six years later, 25,778 students or 31.4 percent had graduated with a baccalaureate degree (See Figure 1). The cohort data also provides information on the number of students who leave before earning a baccalaureate degree at a public institution of higher education. For the 1989 cohort, after six years, almost 41 percent or 33,508 students were no longer enrolled and had not graduated from a public college or university in Texas.

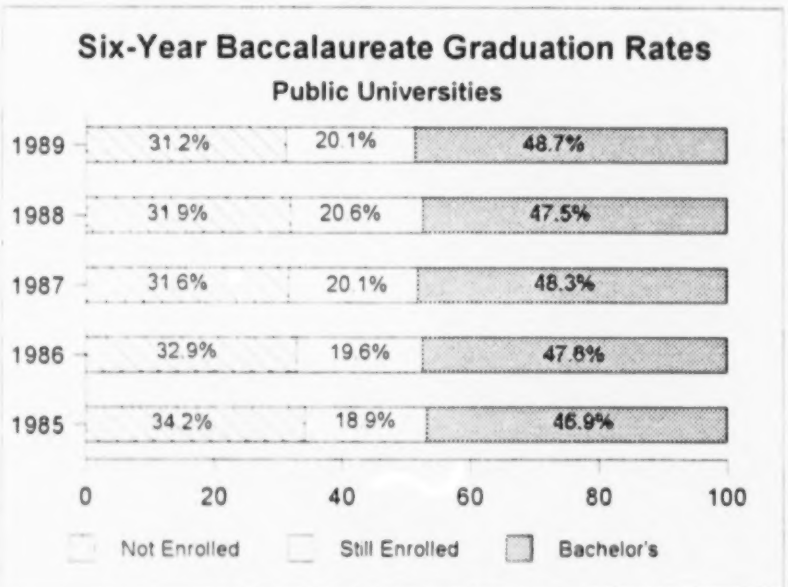

Figure 2

Universities.

Beginning with the fall 1985 cohort, the Coordinating Board has tracked five cohorts of students who entered Texas public universities as first-time/full-time students.

These cohorts, as a group, include 206,006 students who have been tracked for six years following their first fall enrollment. Over this time period, the behavior of each of the cohorts has been remarkably similar (see Figure 2).

By aggregating these cohorts, the typical progress of first-time/full-time freshmen in Texas public universities over the six years following their initial enrollment can be determined. After six years 65,471 students or 47.9 percent had graduated and 41,855 were still enrolled.

For each cohort, there is a large range of graduation rates at individual institutions. The fall 1989 cohort is listed in Appendix A. The rates vary from a low of 12.9 percent to a high of 74.2 percent. The three institutions with the highest graduation rates are Texas A&M University -- 74.2 percent, The University of Texas at Austin -- 69.4 percent, and Stephen F. Austin State University -- 54.5 percent.

Two institutions have managed to achieve significant gains in graduation rates. The University of North Texas has increased its rate from 39 percent of the 1985 cohort to 48.5 percent of the 1989 cohort. The University of Houston has increased its rate from 38.1 percent to 46 percent during the same time period. See Appendix B for a listing of all the public 4-year universities.

For various reasons, some university students take more than six years to graduate. Recognizing this fact, 10-year graduation rates have been calculated for the 1985 cohort.

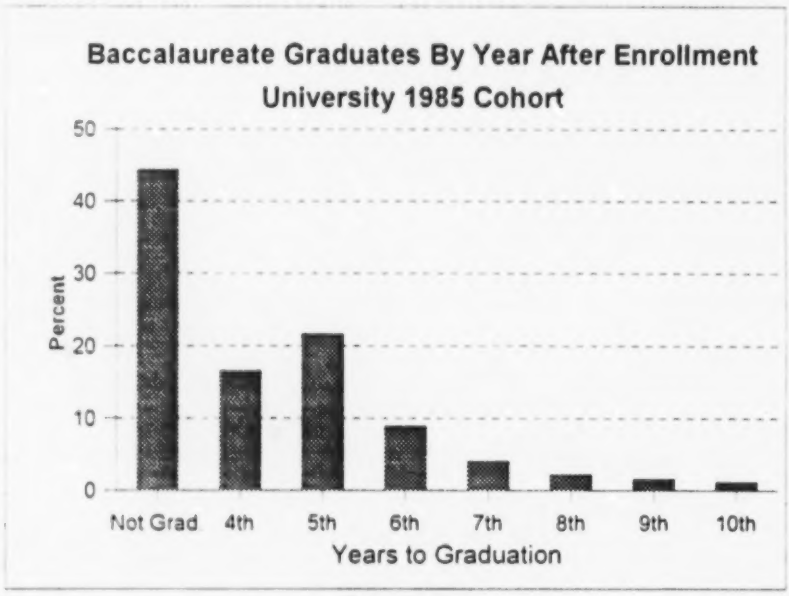

Figure 3

When tracked for a 10-year period, the overall graduation rate increases from 46.9 percent to 55.7 percent (see Figure 3). These numbers illustrate that the majority of students graduate in six or fewer years. However, tracking students for 10 years has a large impact on the graduation rates at some institutions. The number of students that graduate from The University of Texas at Pan American, for example,

increases by 14 percentage points. Table 1 lists the seven institutions that had 10 percentage point or more increases when tracked an additional four years. Appendix C lists the difference in graduation rates for all public 4-year universities.

Table 1
Greatest Change in Baccalaureate Graduation Rate
Six Years and Ten Years*

	6 Years	10 Years	Difference
Angelo State University	43.7%	53.7%	10.1%
Texas A&M-Kingsville	34.1	46.1	12.0
University of Houston	38.7	50.1	11.4
UT at Arlington	35.1	47.7	12.6
UT at El Paso	27.2	39.7	12.5
UT - Pan American	22.1	36.1	14.0
UT at San Antonio	36.2	49.1	12.9

* 1985 cohort, graduation from same or another public university.

Community and Technical Colleges. Even with the variety of goals reported by community and technical college students, it is still the case that many still pursue the baccalaureate degree in Texas. The most likely explanation for the large variance in transfers and baccalaureate degrees between institutions is the different needs and

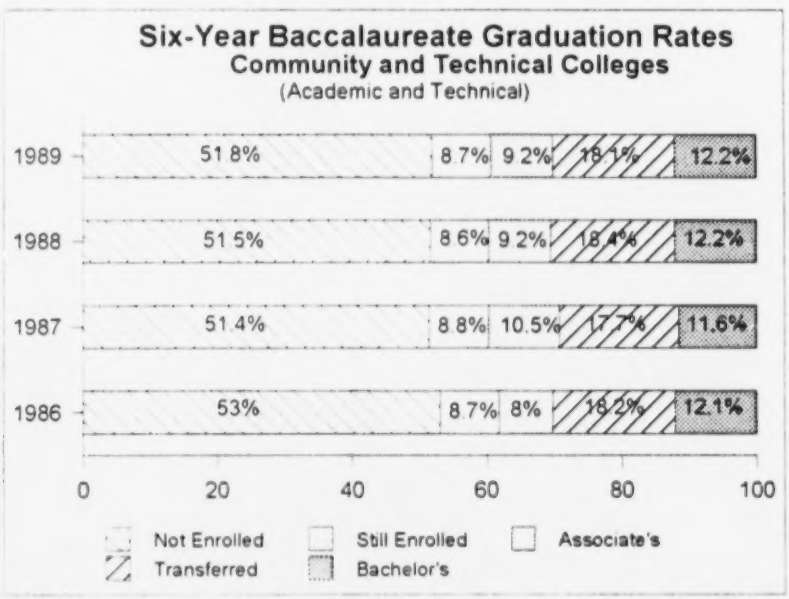

Figure 4

population of the community served by the college. Beginning with fall 1986 the Coordinating Board has tracked four cohorts of students who entered Texas public community and technical colleges as first-time/full-time students. These cohorts, as a group, represent 154,555 students who have been tracked for six years following their first fall enrollment. The statewide averages for these cohorts are nearly identical (see Figure 4). After six years, 18,574 students, or 12 percent had graduated, 18.1 percent had transferred to universities and an additional 13,456 or 8.7 percent were still enrolled.

For the 1989 cohort, including academic and technical students, 12.2 percent had graduated with a baccalaureate degree after six years and another 18.1 percent had transferred to universities. However, it is probably more accurate to exclude technical-vocational students from the cohort since the majority of technical-vocational students do not seek a baccalaureate degree. When this is done, the number of students who have transferred to senior institutions and are still enrolled increases from 18.1 to 21.9 percent and the percentage of students that have graduated with a bachelor's degree within six years increases from 12.2 to 16.3 percent (see Figure 5). It is obvious that community and technical colleges remain an important point of access for students pursuing the baccalaureate degree.

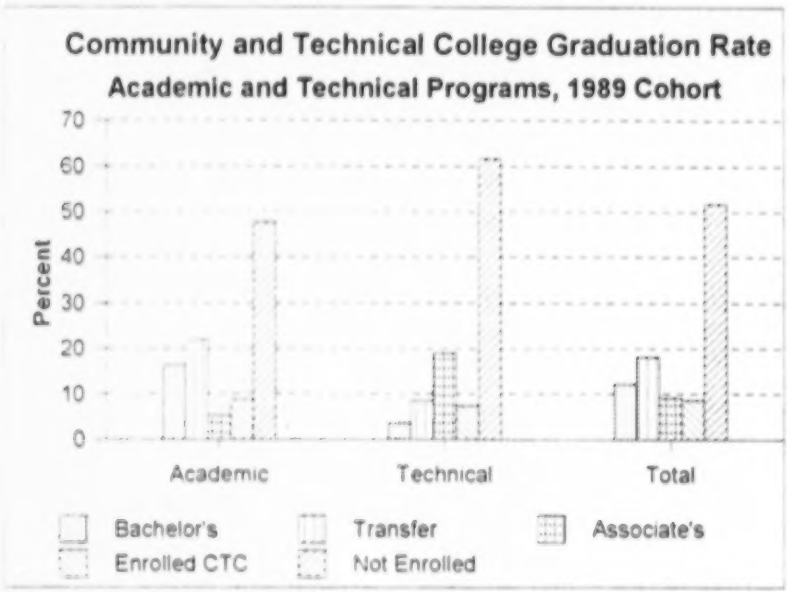

Figure 5

Remediation. In fall 1989, 131,940 first-time entering freshmen enrolled at Texas' public universities and community and technical colleges. Twenty-six percent of these students received some form of remediation. After tracking this remediation cohort for six years, 6.1 percent of the students who received remediation had earned a bachelor's degree, while 27.1 percent of the students who did *not* receive remediation had earned a bachelor's degree.

When the fall 1989 cohort is separated into full- and part-time student categories, the

numbers tell very different stories. Of the full-time students, 37.7 percent of those who did not have any remediation and 9.4 percent of those that received remediation graduated with at least a bachelor's degree after six years. For part-time students, those numbers drop to 6.8 percent for the students not receiving remediation and 2.6 percent for those receiving remediation.

University enrollment accounted for 37 percent of the first-time freshmen entering in fall 1989. The majority (88.7 percent) of those students enrolled full-time. Not quite half (46 percent) of the community college first-time freshmen are full-time students, which may account for the lower graduation rates. In addition, the fact that many community and technical college students seek a certificate or associate degree and not a baccalaureate degree should be taken into account. Table 2 shows the percent of students who received a baccalaureate degree by level and attendance pattern as related to remediation.

Table 2
Remediation and Baccalaureate Graduates
Entering Freshmen Fall 1989

	Part-Time	Full-Time	Total
Universities			
Remediation	8.5%	18.3%	16.1%
No Remediation	18.0	53.9	50.7
Community and Technical Colleges			
Remediation	1.9	4.5	3.0
No Remediation	5.5	15.5	10.5

Minorities. Black and Hispanic students comprised 30 percent of the total first-time/full-time entering freshmen for fall 1989. Black enrollment was approximately 10 percent at both the universities and community colleges. This group accounted for 5.6 percent (6 percent at universities and 4 percent at community colleges) of the bachelor's degrees awarded within six years.

The six-year graduation rates for Black and Hispanic university students are 28.1 percent and 35.3 percent respectively, while the rate for Anglos is 54.3 percent. At community colleges, six-year graduation rates for Anglo students are 14.8 percent, followed by Hispanic students at 7.2 percent and Black students at 5.6 percent.

National Graduation Rates: An Overview

There is no comprehensive compilation of nationwide six-year graduation rates available today. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), however, has collected these rates for its member institutions. Graduation rates are available for 73 public universities in the 10 most populous states. These rates provide some basis for comparison with other states. It is helpful to see in which percentile each of the 10 most populous state's universities fall when compared with all universities.

Examination of Table 3 reveals that Texas has the greatest number of NCAA institutions and the greatest number of its institutions in the bottom 10 percent of graduation rates. Ohio, California, and North Carolina also have a large number of NCAA institutions but, as a whole, they have higher graduation rates than Texas institutions. Illinois' profile is the closest to that of Texas.

Table 3
Percentile Ranking of Public Institutions
In the Ten Most Populous States
NCAA Graduation Rates

Percentile	TX	CA	FL	IL	MI	NC	NJ	NY	OH	PA
90%	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	2
80%	1	3	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
70%	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	2	1
60%	0	2	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	0
50%	0	1	1	1	1	4	0	0	0	0
40%	1	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	2	0
30%	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
20%	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
10%	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Bottom 10%	7	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Institutions	**15**	**14**	**7**	**9**	**4**	**10**	**0**	**2**	**9**	**3**

A small number of states have reported aggregate university graduation rates. Reported six-year rates from other states include Illinois with 51 percent, North Carolina with 56 percent, South Carolina with 55 percent, Virginia with 56.5 percent, and Wisconsin with 61 percent. Colorado with 45.4 percent, Kentucky with 45 percent and Florida with 49 percent have rates similar to Texas.

Fortunately, efforts are under way to gather graduation rates for all higher education institutions across the nation. New reporting requirements developed by the federal government's National Center for Education Statistics will include this data in its Beginning Postsecondary Student Study.

Summary

Six-year graduation rates at Texas public universities have improved slightly (1.8 percent) from 1985 cohort to 1989 cohort. Even this small increase indicates that an additional 718 students earned a bachelor's degree. Graduation rates in Texas, however, still do not compare well with the figures that are currently available from other states and NCAA institutions. In Texas, after six years, only 48.7 percent of the university cohort had graduated from the same or different public institution in Texas.

Though it remains difficult to make national comparisons, tracking students has provided some insight into the progress of students through the public higher education system in Texas:

- Students who enroll in at least 12 semester credit hours (SCH) their first semester in college are more likely to have graduated within six years of their initial college enrollment.
- Students who require remediation are less likely to graduate within six years of their initial enrollment.
- Students who graduate within six years enroll in approximately 12 SCH each semester whether they take four, five, or six years to graduate.
- During their college careers, students who earn baccalaureate degrees within six years enroll in 18.6 more SCH than those who graduate in five years, and 36.2 SCH more than those who graduate in four years.
- Six years is probably an inadequate period to determine how many community and technical college students are likely to earn a baccalaureate degree because almost 50 percent of those students are enrolled part-time.

- The majority of first-time/full-time university students who graduate do so within six years.
- After six years, 20.1 percent of the 1989 university cohort is still enrolled in a public college or university.
- After six years, 26.8 percent of the 1989 community and technical college cohort is stilled enrolled in a public college or university.

The national Beginning Postsecondary Student Study provides additional self-reported information on student progress at institutions across the country. These conclusions probably also apply to the behavior of students in Texas:

- More than 20 percent of students changed their degree major.
- Almost 7 percent of two-year college students reported they were not working toward a degree.
- More than 50 percent of two-year college students were working toward an associate degree and almost 25 percent were working toward a baccalaureate degree.
- Approximately 90 percent of four-year college students were working toward a baccalaureate degree.

Appendix A

Baccalaureate Graduation Rates for Public Universities
First-Time Entering Freshmen Enrolled for 12 or More Semester Credit Hours in Fall 1989

	Baccalaureate Same Institution	Baccalaureate Other Institution	Still Enrolled Same Institution	Still Enrolled Other Institution	Not Enrolled
Angelo State University	32.6%	12.8%	7.2%	10.3%	37.0%
Lamar University	16.4%	4.8%	9.1%	11.4%	58.2%
Midwestern State University	22.3%	8.8%	12.0%	12.8%	44.2%
Prairie View A&M University	22.7%	1.7%	6.8%	10.0%	58.9%
Sam Houston State University	33.0%	8.2%	7.3%	15.0%	36.5%
Southwest Texas State Univ	31.3%	11.7%	7.3%	16.2%	33.6%
Stephen F. Austin University	41.7%	12.8%	5.0%	12.5%	28.0%
Sul Ross State University	19.8%	6.5%	7.6%	12.2%	54.0%
Tarleton State University	30.9%	7.4%	5.5%	12.0%	44.0%
Texas A&M University	65.9%	8.9%	3.6%	8.6%	12.9%
Texas A&M - Commerce	35.5%	6.7%	6.9%	9.2%	41.6%
Texas A&M - Kingsville	25.6%	5.0%	11.5%	12.9%	45.1%
Texas A&M Galveston	28.0%	11.4%	3.4%	16.5%	40.7%
Texas Southern University	11.7%	1.2%	14.0%	10.5%	62.6%
Texas Tech University	40.9%	10.4%	7.4%	12.5%	28.9%
Texas Woman's University	33.3%	6.2%	5.6%	13.8%	41.1%
Univ of Houston - Downtown	7.3%	7.8%	9.5%	22.0%	53.3%
University of Houston	37.4%	8.6%	12.4%	14.1%	27.4%
University of North Texas	37.9%	10.6%	10.1%	11.4%	29.9%
UT - Arlington	27.4%	8.2%	10.0%	16.0%	38.5%
UT - Austin	63.6%	5.8%	5.2%	8.7%	16.6%
UT - El Paso	23.6%	3.7%	19.5%	14.5%	38.7%
UT - Pan American	19.8%	3.4%	20.5%	12.5%	43.9%
UT - San Antonio	23.8%	9.0%	12.4%	16.0%	38.8%
West Texas A&M University	26.5%	7.5%	7.3%	11.3%	47.4%
Statewide	**40.5%**	**8.2%**	**8.1%**	**12.0%**	**31.2%**

The following institutions were not included because they did not have first-time entering freshmen in 1989: Sul Ross Rio Grande College, Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi, Texas A&M University - Texarkana, The University of Texas at Dallas, The University of Texas of the Permian Basin, The University of Texas at Tyler, University of Houston - Clear Lake, University of Houston - Victoria.

Appendix B

Change in Six-Year Baccalaureate Graduation Rates,* Public Universities 1985 and 1989 Cohorts

	1985 Cohort	1989 Cohort	Difference
Angelo State University	43.7	45.4	1.7
Lamar University	22.6	21.2	-1.4
Midwestern State University	34.7	31.1	-3.6
Prairie View A&M University	31.4	24.4	-7
Sam Houston State University	42.9	41.2	-1.7
Southwest Texas State Univ	42.6	43.0	0.4
Stephen F. Austin University	51.8	54.5	2.7
Sul Ross State University	29.8	26.3	-3.5
Tarleton State University	0**	38.3	na
Texas A&M University	74.4	74.8	0.4
Texas A&M - Commerce	42.9	42.2	-0.7
Texas A&M - Kingsville	34.2	30.6	-3.6
Texas A&M at Galveston	0**	39.4	na
Texas Southern University	10.3	12.9	2.6
Texas Tech University	47.8	51.3	3.5
Texas Woman's University	40.7	39.5	-1.2
Univ of Houston - Downtown	12	15.1	3.1
University of Houston	38.1	46.0	7.9
University of North Texas	39	48.5	9.5
UT - Arlington	35.1	35.6	0.5
UT - Austin	67	69.4	2.4
UT - El Paso	27.2	27.3	0.1
UT - Pan American	22.1	23.2	1.1
UT - San Antonio	36.2	32.8	-3.4
West Texas A&M	30.3	34.0	3.7
Statewide	46.9	48.7	1.8

* These rates reflect students who entered the institution in the fall and six years later had either graduated from the same institution or another public university.
** Reporting error in Fall 1985.

Appendix C

Analysis of Total Graduates by Institution Public Universities
First Time Entering Freshmen
Fall 1985, 12 or More Semester Credit Hours

	Fall 85 Cohort	4 Year	5 Year	6 Year	7 Year	8 Year	9 Year	10 Year	Total Grads
Angelo State University	1,137	16.6%	17.7%	9.3%	4.8%	2.4%	1.7%	1.3%	53.74%
Texas A&M - Commerce	474	16.7%	19.8%	6.5%	3.4%	2.3%	0.6%	1.1%	50.42%
Lamar University	1,600	4.9%	12.1%	5.9%	2.4%	2.0%	1.1%	1.6%	30.00%
Midwestern State University	510	9.2%	17.3%	7.7%	3.9%	3.3%	1.2%	1.2%	43.73%
Prairie View A&M University	742	12.8%	13.8%	6.1%	2.0%	1.1%	1.1%	0.8%	37.60%
Sam Houston State University	1,409	14.0%	20.9%	7.8%	2.8%	2.2%	1.0%	1.1%	49.89%
Southwest Texas State Univ	2,854	12.6%	19.9%	9.2%	3.9%	2.3%	1.6%	1.2%	50.67%
Stephen F. Austin University	2,003	20.1%	23.6%	8.1%	3.9%	2.0%	1.3%	1.1%	59.91%
Sul Ross State University	293	9.6%	13.0%	6.8%	3.4%	1.0%	1.7%	0.0%	35.49%
Tarleton State University	58	12.1%	19.0%	10.3%	3.5%	3.5%	1.7%	0.0%	50.00%
Texas A&M University	4,814	29.4%	36.4%	8.8%	3.5%	1.7%	1.1%	0.7%	81.39%
Texas A&M - Kingsville	590	8.0%	18.3%	10.3%	4.2%	2.9%	1.4%	1.0%	46.10%
Texas A&M Galveston	9	22.2%	11.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.33%
Texas Southern University	783	1.9%	4.1%	4.5%	3.1%	1.3%	2.4%	0.9%	18.14%
Texas Tech University	4,420	16.2%	22.5%	8.9%	4.0%	1.7%	1.5%	1.0%	56.04%
Texas Woman's University	341	15.0%	19.1%	6.5%	3.5%	1.2%	2.4%	0.6%	48.09%
Univ of Houston - Downtown	556	0.9%	6.5%	5.2%	3.6%	2.3%	2.3%	1.1%	21.94%
University of Houston	1,392	10.2%	15.2%	13.4%	5.5%	2.9%	1.9%	1.1%	50.14%
University of North Texas	1,950	9.5%	20.8%	8.6%	5.0%	2.6%	1.4%	1.0%	48.97%
UT - Arlington	1,673	6.6%	17.2%	11.5%	6.1%	3.0%	2.0%	1.4%	47.70%
UT - Austin	6,234	30.0%	27.9%	8.9%	3.6%	1.9%	1.4%	1.0%	74.61%
UT - El Paso	1,403	3.3%	12.1%	12.6%	4.7%	2.9%	2.6%	1.6%	39.70%
UT - Pan American	1,230	4.9%	8.8%	9.3%	5.6%	3.6%	2.2%	1.8%	36.10%
UT - San Antonio	1,132	7.0%	18.4%	11.0%	5.5%	2.9%	2.6%	1.8%	49.12%
West Texas A&M University	681	11.0%	13.2%	6.3%	2.9%	1.5%	0.9%	0.9%	36.71%
Statewide	**38,288**	**16.5%**	**21.6%**	**8.9%**	**4.0%**	**2.2%**	**1.5%**	**1.1%**	**55.69%**

Related reports available from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Division of Research, Planning and Finance.

Administrative Expenditures in Texas Public Universities, October 1994

An Overview of Texas Public Higher Education Funding for the 1996-97 Biennium, April 1996

Appropriations for Remedial Instruction in Texas Public Institutions of Higher Education, July 1996

Master Plan for Texas Higher Education, 1995

Ten Strategies and their Financial Implications for Reducing Time-To-Degree in Texas Universities, October 1996

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